565 vast wealth from landed property. But towards the end of the century a drastic reduction of the big estates paralyzed the power of the nobility for good and strengthened the position of the [554] king and the peasant population. The few noble families in Finland have long ago lost their importance and prestige, and now birth alone does not have any significance in the position of the individual in the society.

[191] Another and much deeper-rooted differentiation has been caused by the predominance in Finland of the Swedish language. Until a century ago all the educated classes in the country were Swedish-speaking and were looked upon by the people half reverently, half scornfully, as "gentlefolks." This attitude still exists to some extent, although it is hard to define specifically.

specifically. Learning and education are valued very highly by the Finns and still give prestige to the individual. On the other hand, there is a short-sighted attitude noticeable among the workers, who consider only manual labor to be "real work" and white-collar people, accordingly, as people of leisure, living on the toil of others. The fact that in Finland higher education actually is accessible to anyone who can meet the qualifications and that skilled factory workers earn a salary far above that of the clerks and petty officials,has been very slow to be realized. Communist propaganda has tried hard to keep alive this resentment, for, it must be remembered, in Finland only a very few intellectuals have ever held communist views.

Wealth, of course, gives a certain kind of

554 434 Wealth, of course, gives a certain kind of prestige and, at the same time, provides an additional cause of resentment. But differences in wealth cannot play an extremely important role in the society, since the national income is very evenly distributed among the population. No Finns have big incomes by American, British or even Swedish standards. The annual average income per person, children included, was in 1949 about 80,000 Finnish marks, or less than 500 dollars. On the other hand, there are very few really poor people either. The worst off are the owners of small farms in the districts next to the eastern boundary in the north of Finland, where the soil is meagre and agriculture, as a whole, a hazardous undertaking. But there are no slum areas in the cities, and beggary is non-existent.

528 intellectuals and workers alike, have summer cottages in the country, on an island or on a lake shore, while others rent rooms in farmhouses and cheerfully spend three months "roughing it." Near the cities the islands and shores are dotted with cottages, with gardens cleared around them, but many people prefer to find a summer home in a desolate, distant [554] locality. The possession of one's own cottage is valued much higher than ownership of a car, for example. The family leaves the city as soon as the schools close at the end of May, and the father, who must continue with his job in town, commutes between the two localities all through the summer, every day or on week-342 ends, depending on the distance. Many of the cottages are built by the owners themselves.

913 Higher education has been valued by the Finns for centuries, and the number of students in secondary schools and universities is proportionally greater in Finland than in Sweden; comparisons with any other country are difficult to make because of differences in educational systems. Parents are encouraged to send their children to the vocational schools, which frequently provide opportunities to better financial [554] positions than the middle school; however, attendance at a secondary school still provides a certain social prestige, and for this reason many parents struggle to keep their children here even when they lack the necessary intellectual ability and show no interest in theoretical studies. As a result, the number of secondary schools is too small to admit more than about two-thirds of the applicants, and the number of people with